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4 Aug 53

6 Aug 53

EAST GERMAN ACTION AGAINST THE WESTERN FOOD PROGRAM

The initial East German reaction to the food program on 28 July was the press claim that the gifts would "compel" closure of the sector border. Communist propaganda also condemned the program as inimical to German unity.

As the success of the program became apparent, the East Germans on Saturday evening, 1 August, banned the sale of passenger tickets from Soviet zone cities to Berlin. On the same day the Communists attempted to counteract the program by issuing food gifts to "West Berlin unemployed and pensioners." However, only about 50 persons lined up for these gifts, most of them East Berliners. At the same time thousands of East Germans were streaming into Berlin to get their food gifts from the West. On 3 August East Berlin centers were again issuing food packages, with about 400 recipients showing up.

On 2 August the ban on railway travel resulted in clashes between East German police and food-seekers at railway stations at Berlin, Halle, Nauen, Babelsberg, Neustrelitz, Oranienburg,

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Koenigswusterhausen and Leipzig. In Chemnitz,

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the police were overpowered and various buildings,

including state-owned food stores, burned. At Potsdam and Cottbus

German police reportedly fired on mobs attacking railway stations.

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the workers of the giant Leuna

chemical works and the Buna plant near Halle attempted a mass march

on Berlin on 2 August.

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According to the press, Soviet tanks and troops were massing in trouble

areas on 2 August. On this date only about ^{90,000}~~50,000~~ packages were

handed out in West Berlin. This figure compares with 203,219 packages distributed on 1 August and the peak of 260,000 on 31 July.

Further Communist restrictions were imposed on the night of 2 August, according to the press, when East German police blockaded most of the highways leading to Berlin. Food packages were also being confiscated from East Germans at railway stations, allegedly to be

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returned to West Berlin unemployed. Some Soviet zone residents were reportedly hiding in East Berlin because of the highway blockade.

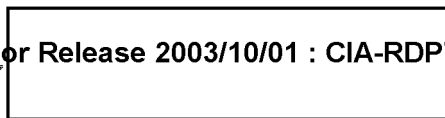
On 3 August the West Berlin centers continued to issue food to the East Berliners. The situation in the Soviet sector was reported to be almost normal with free passage across the border.

The Soviet zone highway and rail bans are apparently still in effect. However, at 1400 on 3 August the Potsdam railroad station was selling tickets to Berlin. Work stoppages and strikes have been reported by the press, but are not confirmed. If there are work stoppages or disorders, further repressive measures would have to be taken by the East Germans.

In explaining their repressive measures, the East German press states that the West intended to organize "provocations" against the East German workers. It describes the food distribution as an attempt to enlist new espionage agents against East Germany. It also stresses that "food shortages and hunger" prevail in West Berlin, while pointing up reports of food arrivals in East Germany from the Soviet Union. It is reliably reported, however, that there has been no increase in food

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shipments from the Soviet Union since the 17 June riots. The Communist press and radio also warns of high penalties for transferring identification cards. Individuals had been picking up Western food packages for several persons at once by showing these cards.

East zone visitors at the RIAS radio in West Berlin said the population was aroused and bitter over the actions of the East German government.

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